DARK HORSE COMICS
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EARTH WAR
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JOHN BOLTON 1990

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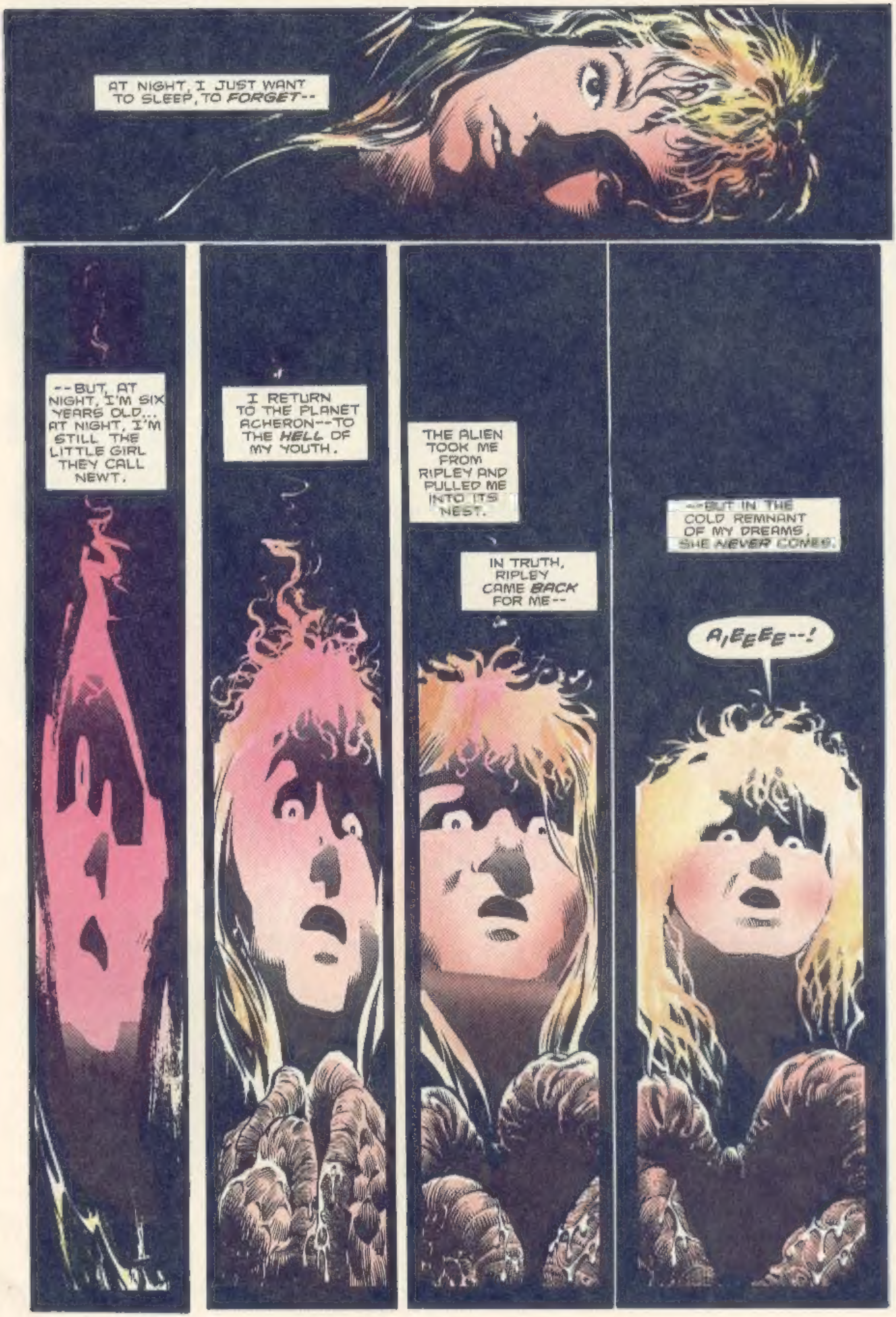
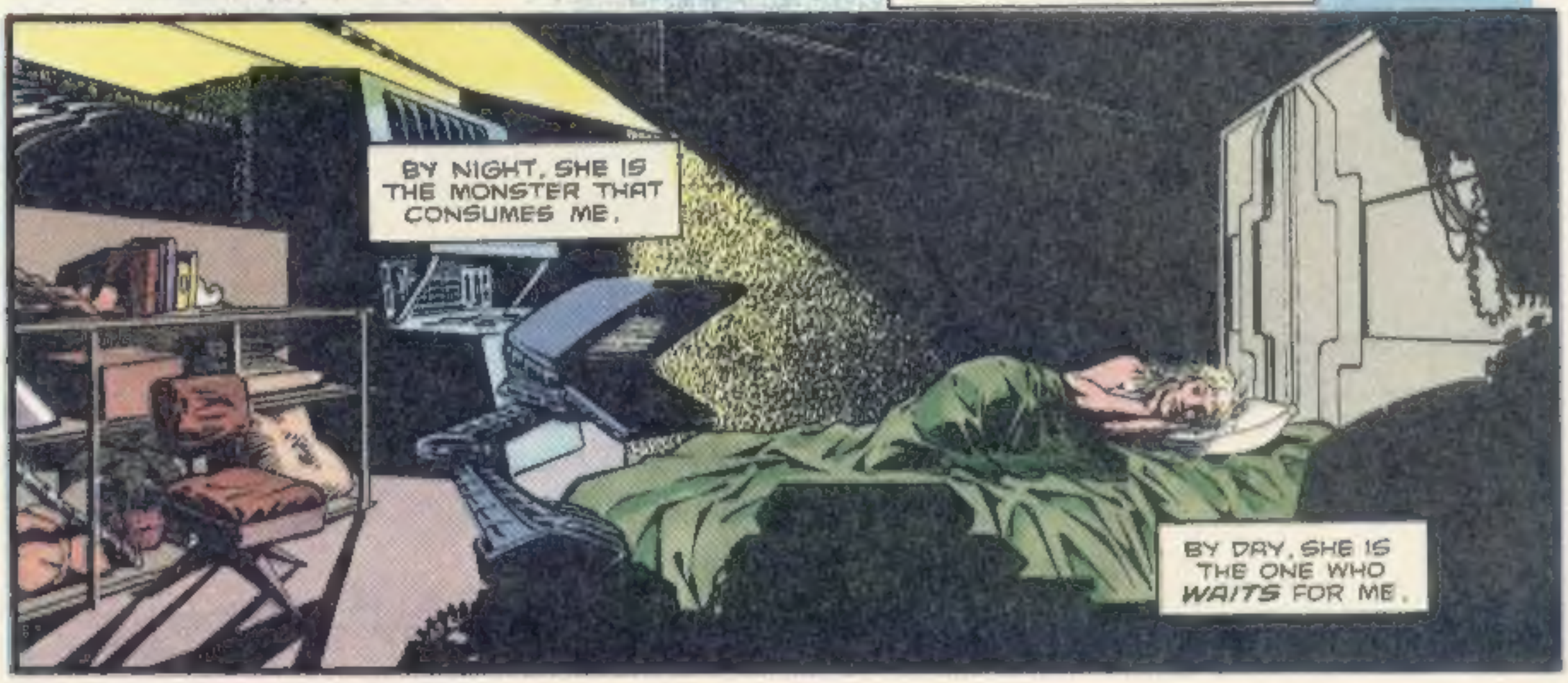

AT NIGHT, I JUST WANT TO SLEEP, TO *FORGET*--
--BUT, AT NIGHT, I'M SIX YEARS OLD... AT NIGHT, I'M STILL THE LITTLE GIRL THEY CALL NEWT.
I RETURN TO THE PLANET ACHERON--TO THE *HELL* OF MY YOUTH.
THE ALIEN TOOK ME FROM RIPLEY AND PULLED ME INTO ITS NEST.
IN TRUTH, RIPLEY CAME *BACK* FOR ME--
--BUT IN THE COLD REMNANT OF MY DREAMS, SHE *NEVER* COMES.
A,EEEEE--!

IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME.
THE ALIEN HONORS ME WITH ITS SEED--
--WITH ITS DARKNESS--
--AND SUDDENLY, I AM PART OF SOMETHING MAGNIFICENT AND POWERFUL, SOMETHING THAT TRANSCENDS HUMAN WEAKNESS.

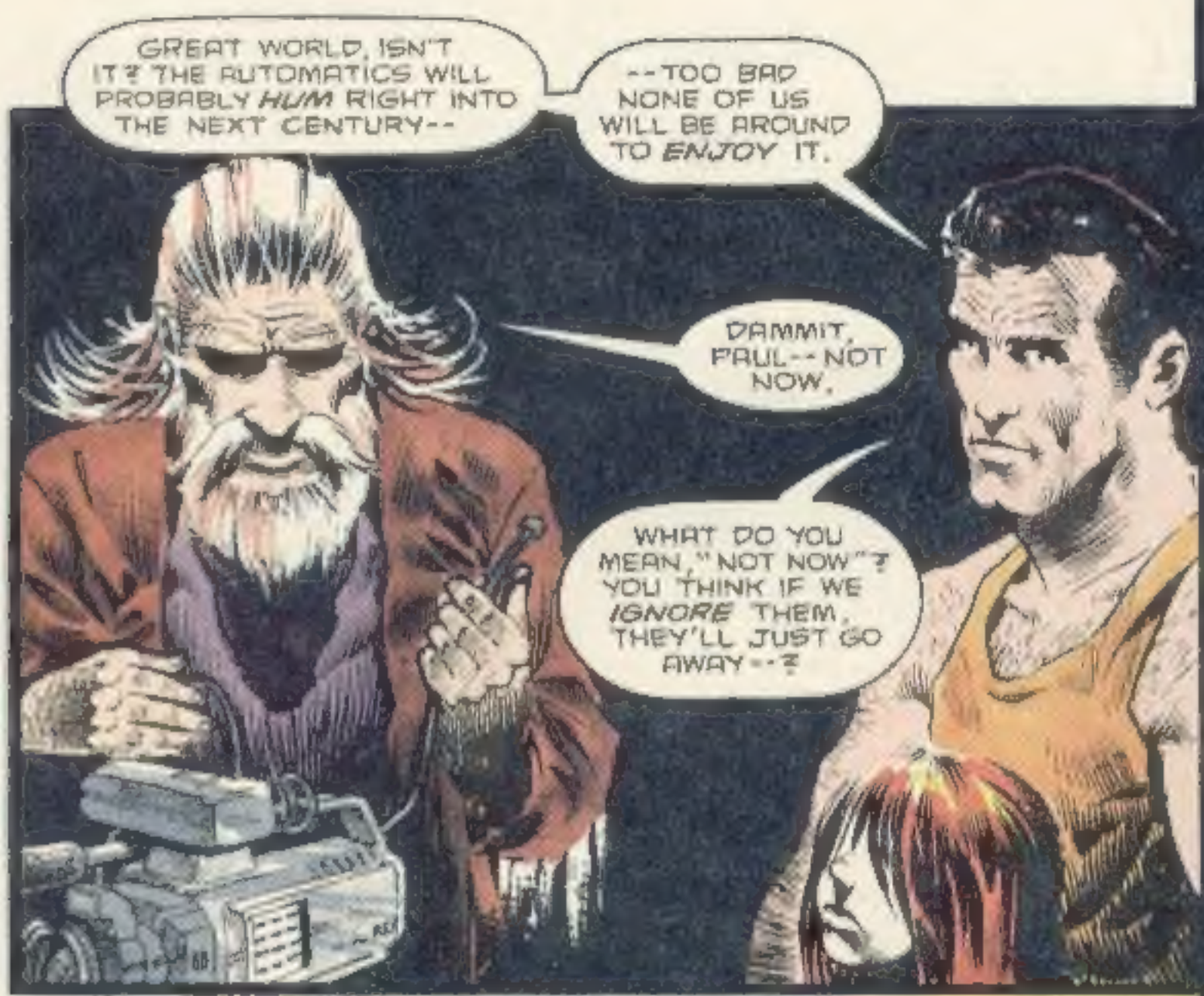
THAT'S WHEN I *SEE* HER.

SHE'S NOT OF ACHERON--SHE'S NOT OF *ANY* WORLD.

SHE TAKES ROOT WHERE IT *SERVES* HER, SPREADING HER PROGENY LIKE SOME MALIGNANT *DISEASE*.


BY NIGHT, SHE IS THE MONSTER THAT CONSUMES ME.
BY DAY, SHE IS THE ONE WHO *WAITS* FOR ME.

" DADDY? ARE WE GOING TO DIE?"
VIA SATELLITE LINK
C'MON, DAMN IT--
" WE--WE ALL DIE SOMEDAY, HONEY. IT'S THE WAY OF THINGS."
" BUT IT'S DIFFERENT NOW, ISN'T IT?"
" IT'S ALL DIFFERENT, AMY. I WISH YOU COULD HAVE SEEN IT BEFORE, WHEN YOUR MOTHER...
" I STILL SEE MOMMY WHEN I SLEEP. SHE TELLS ME TO BE A GOOD GIRL. SHE TELLS ME SHE LOVES ME."
...WHEN SHE WAS STILL--"
DON'T KNOW WHY WE BOTHER.
THERE'S NOBODY LEFT. NOBODY TO SEE.
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS-- MIDSUMMER AND IT'S 30 DEGREES...
...WHAT THE HELL'S GOING ON?
ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THOSE THINGS KILL US...
...OR BREED US, LIKE THOSE OTHER POOR BASTARDS.
I'LL BREED MY GODDAMN BRAINS INTO A WALL BEFORE I LET THEM TOUCH ME.
SOMETIMES I THINK I'VE BEEN BAD, AND THAT'S WHY THE MONSTERS CAME--
--THAT'S WHY THEY TOOK MOMMY FROM US.
AMY, NO...
BEN, GIVE ME A HAND--!


GREAT WORLD, ISN'T IT? THE AUTOMATICS WILL PROBABLY *HUM* RIGHT INTO THE NEXT CENTURY--
--TOO BAD NONE OF US WILL BE AROUND TO *ENJOY* IT.
DAMMIT, PAUL--NOT NOW.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "NOT NOW"? YOU THINK IF WE *IGNORE* THEM, THEY'LL JUST GO AWAY--?

LOOK AROUND YOU, MAN--THIS ISN'T *EARTH* ANYMORE. IT'S A *NEW* WORLD.
THEIR WORLD.

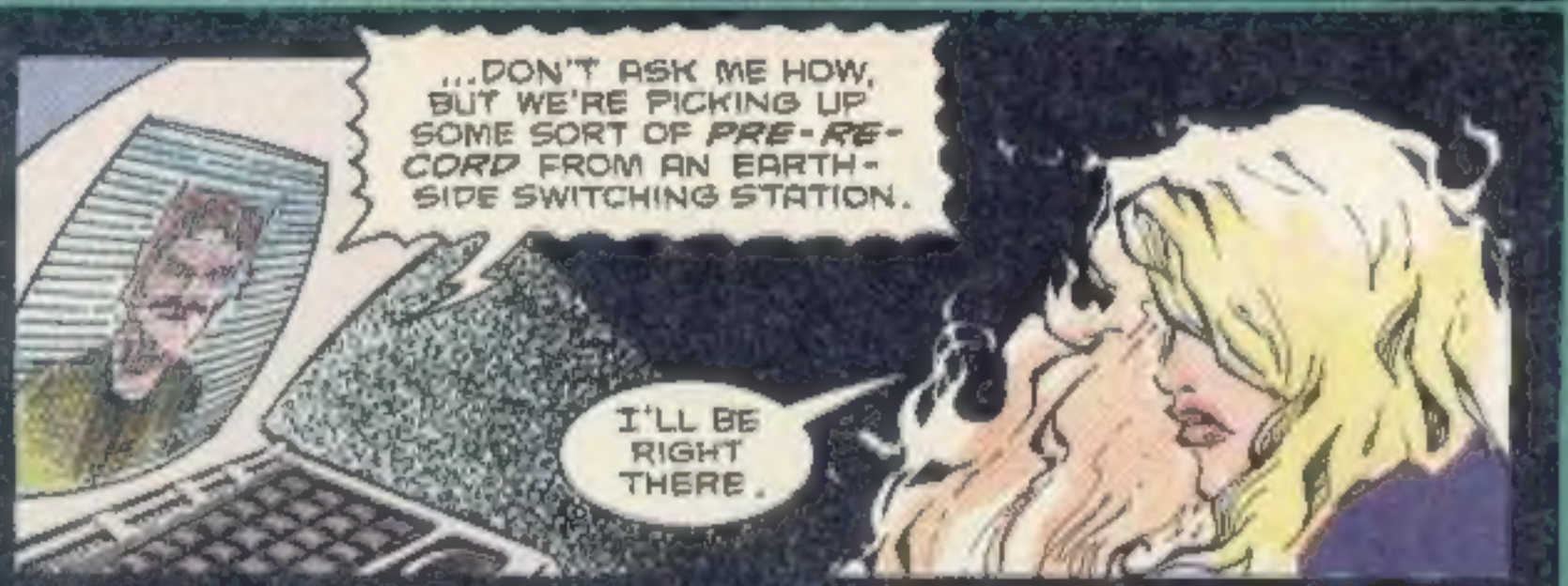
THAT'S ENOUGH!
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO SAY? YOU'RE *RIGHT*? IT'S *OVER*?

HERE--*LOOK AT IT:* THREE SHOTS LEFT.
I KNOW WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST. I KNOW OUR *CHANCES*.
WHY DON'T YOU *USE* IT? IF THERE'S A HELL, IT CAN'T BE ANY WORSE THAN *THIS*.

I--I *CAN'T*...
...THERE'S A *REASON* WHY WE'RE HERE--A *REASON* THOSE THINGS HAVEN'T *TAKEN* US...
...SOMEONE'S OUT THERE...

"...I CAN *FEEL* IT."

EXCUSE ME--
--YOU ASKED TO BE *NOTIFIED* IF WE STARTED RECEIVING OVER EARTH-SAT 19...


...DON'T ASK ME HOW, BUT WE'RE PICKING UP SOME SORT OF *PRE-RECORD* FROM AN EARTH-SIDE SWITCHING STATION.
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.

SOMEHOW I *KNEW* SHE WAS STILL ALIVE.
AUTOSCANNER PICKED IT UP. I QUIT TRACKING THEM DAYS AGO. THEY MUST HAVE FOUND A WAY TO TAP INTO THE GROUND RELAYS--

--SOMEBODY DOWN THERE *REALLY* WANTS TO TALK.
WE'D NEVER MET, BUT I *KNEW* HER, KNEW WHAT SHE WAS THINKING, WHAT SHE WAS FEELING--

--I KNEW THE SHRILL SOUND OF HER *SCREAMS*.
...THEY'RE USING THE UNDERGROUND TO MOVE FREELY BENEATH THE CITY. THE TUNNELS AND GRIDS ARE STILL HERE, BUT *CHANGED--TRANSFORMED.*

WE TRIED STAYING ABOVE GROUND, BUT SO MANY HAVE BEEN *TAKEN* BY THE ALIEN. THEY--THEY *IDENTIFY* WITH THE CREATURES...
...*HUNTING* US TO APPEASE THEIR NEW MASTER.

MUCH OF WHAT OCCURRED ON ACHERON HAS BECOME A *BLUR*-- TIME'S SOFTENED THE MEMORY INTO A SWIRL OF *BLOOD* AND *SHADOW*.

IT--IT'S DIFFICULT TO BE SURE, BUT THE TUNNELS APPEAR TO CONVERGE INTO A CENTRAL *LOCUS*-- LIKE *SPOKES* ON A WHEEL.

THE INNOCENCE OF YOUTH IS BOTH A *STRENGTH* AND A *WEAKNESS*.

WE'RE COMING CLOSER TO THE HUB. THERE ARE MORE BODIES NOW, FUSED INTO THE WALLS LIKE MAD *SCULPTURE*.

--THEY'RE *IMMERSED* IN DEATH. THEY *SURROUND* THEMSELVES WITH IT.

PERHAPS THAT TERRIBLE, SHEER *FINALITY* IS THE ONLY THING THEY TRULY UNDERSTAND.

JESUS, PAUL-- DO YOU *HEAR* THAT?

THERE IS TIME TO *HEAL*-- BUT YOU HAVE THE SAME LONG YEARS TO *REMEMBER*. TO *DREAM*.

I USED TO WONDER WHY THEY RECLAIMED THEMSELVES--FILLED THEIR WORLD WITH THE DECAY OF DEATH. THEN I REALIZED--

" WE--WE HEARD STORIES FROM OTHER CITIES ABOUT THE ALIEN BREEDERS. DOZENS WERE FOUND AND DESTROYED, BACK WHEN WE STILL HAD HOPE.
" BUT THEY SAID THE CREATURES BRED IN ISOLATION, TO PROTECT THE NASCENT EGGS.
" THIS ONE'S EXPOSED, IN THE OPEN, AS IF--
"--AS IF SHE'S WAITING FOR SOMETHING."

LET'S GO BACK INTO THE TUNNELS I DON'T LIKE THE--
NOOOOOO!
DADDY--!
SHE--SHE WANTS YOU--SHE WANTS YOU--ahh-- TO TOUCH ahh--YYYEEEAAGHH!
GET HIM OFF ME--!
AHHHHHH-- L--LOOK AT IT--LOOK WHAT IT'S BECOME--
--SO BEAUTIFUL-- SO--AHH-- AHHGGG--
OH GOD-- HELP ME! HELP--

BLOOM
LEROOMP
THREE SHOTS-- D-DADDY SAID THREE SHOTS
GO AWAY--
ROOM
JUST LEAVE US ALONE--
"KAKE "KAKE-- THEY HAD TO HAVE HEARD THE SHOTS-- LET'S GO.
GOD, NO.
NOT AGAIN.

NOT AGAIN!
I WANTED TO STEAL A SHIP, A TRANSPORT, ANYTHING.
WHERE IS IT--?
I COULDN'T BEAR TO WATCH IT HAPPEN AGAIN.
BUT I KNEW THE CHILD'S ONLY HOPE WAS RIPLEY'S WAY--IT WAS THE ONLY HOPE FOR ANY OF US
EVERYONE I'VE EVER LOVED HAS BEEN TAKEN BY THE ALIEN.
NOT THIS TIME.

JESUS RIPLEY I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU RE SERIOUS--
--YOU WANT TO PUT BACK INTO SPACE BECAUSE OF SOME DAMNED DREAM?
IT'S MORE THAN A DREAM HICKS SHE'S REAL.
SO WHAT IF SHE IS?
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF YOUR SUICIDE MISSIONS!
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
I'M TALKING ABOUT THOSE THINGS! WE'VE BEEN LUCKY SO FAR, BUT THAT'S BOUND TO RUN OUT.
...KEEP PUSHING AND WE'LL ALL END UP DEAD OR WORSE.
YOU RE SCARED.

WE RE ALL SCARED, RIPLEY
YOU KNOW WHAT THE ALIEN CAN DO THAT DOESN'T SCARE YOU?
NOT AS MUCH AS KNOWING THEY'RE STILL OUT THERE--AND THERE'S SOMETHING WE CAN DO TO STOP THEM
NONE OF US WILL KNOW ANY PEACE UNTIL IT'S OVER--
SO NOW YOU WANT TO TAKE THE OFFENSIVE. WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU, RIPLEY? REMEMBER ACHERON? "NUKE IT FROM SPACE--IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO BE SURE."
WHAT ABOUT YOU, NEWT? ARE YOU BUYING INTO RIPLEY'S NIGHTMARE--?
I DON'T HAVE ANY CHOICE.
THIS ISN'T ABOUT ME ANYMORE
EARTH'S GONE, OVERRUN BY THOSE DAMNED THINGS WHAT'S CHANGED?
NOTHING.
EVERYTHING
I'VE SPENT THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS SEEING HER--FEELING HER -
--HOPING THE VISIONS WOULD STOP.

WE SHOULD BE FINISHED BY TONIGHT, BUT--
--I DON'T GET IT WHAT'S YOUR "RIPLEY" PLANNING TO TRANSPORT IN THIS THING?
WE-- WE'RE NOT EXACTLY SURE.
DON'T GET ME WRONG--IT'S ALL BEEN SEAT-OF-THE-PANTS SINCE THOSE THINGS CUT OUR EARTHSIDE SUPPLY LINE--
BUT NO REAL SPECS NO DIMENSIONS NO WEIGHT PROJECTIONS? THAT'S PUSHING IT
YOU KNOW AS MUCH AS WE DO
THEN NOBODY KNOWS SHIT, DO THEY?
C'MON, GUYS-- GIVE ME A BREAK. YOU'RE SETTING SOMETHING UP OFF-WORLD, RIGHT? NEW COLONY, SPACE STATION, WHAT?
ARE YOU A RELIGIOUS MAN, MCFEE?
NEVER HAD MUCH USE FOR IT. WHY?
I'M LEARNING IT'S IMPORTANT TO BELIEVE IN SOMETHING-- ANYTHING--
--EVEN DREAMS.

WE'RE AS CRAZY AS RIPLEY-- FLYING HALFWAY TO HELL, AND FOR WHAT?
EVEN IF THIS THING EXISTS, WHO SAYS WE'LL BE ABLE TO *CATCH* IT?
HERE-- RIPLEY CONVINCED THE BASE COMMANDER TO *HOLD THEM* WHILE SHE ARRANGED FOR A SHIP.
STOREROOM'S BEEN UNDER LOCK AND KEY EVER SINCE. SEEMS EVEN THE *IDEA* OF HAVING THEM ABOARD GIVES THE RANK AND FILE THE JITTERS
THEY'RE *DEAD*.
DOESN'T THE CREW *UNDER-STAND* THAT?
SURE, I GUESS--CHRIST, I DON'T KNOW--
--SOME-TIMES I'M NOT SURE I DO

RIPLEY HAD ASKED ME TO MEET HER IN THE SPACE STATION'S DRY DOCK TO COMPLETE PREPARATIONS FOR LAUNCH
FUNNY WE CLING TO OUR PRIMITIVE CYCLE OF DAY AND NIGHT THE RITUAL OF THE SUN - BUT IT'S ALWAYS DARK IN SPACE
WE BEND THE TRUTH TO ACCOMMODATE OUR HUMAN WEAKNESS, WHEREAS THE ALIEN MERELY .. ADAPTS.
NEWT-- HERE
RIPLEY--!
HOW-- HOW MANY DID YOU--?
ENOUGH
GOD--!
THEY BROUGHT UP A COUPLE DOZEN SPECIMENS--
-- IN ORDER TO RUN BIOLOGICAL AND WEAPONS TESTS --
--BEFORE EVERYTHING WENT TO HELL
THEY'RE BORN UGLY AND THEY STAY UGLY
SNIK!
LET'S DO IT

MARINE VESSEL SULACO: EYES ONLY FINAL REPORT
SULACO STUPID GODDAMN NAME FOR A SHIP
MAYBE THAT'S WHY IT FIT.
APONE--HUDSON--VASQUEZ. IN THE WORLD THEY WERE NOTHING--
--BUT OUT THERE THEY WERE MY FRIENDS
I WOULD HAVE DIED FOR THEM--
--SHOULD HAVE DIED FOR THEM.
YOU SON OF A BITCH!
YOU HAD TO PUSH IT--MARK ME--SEE HOW FAR I'D GO...
KSSSHH!
WELL, IT'S OVER.
YOU WIN.

CAPTAIN?
COME WITH ME A MINUTE, RIPLEY. WE'VE GOT TO *TALK*.
I'M NOT GOING TO *ALLOW* LAUNCH UNTIL YOU FIND A COMMAND RATED PILOT
WHEN THIS STARTED, YOU TOLD ME *HICKS*--
HICKS CHANGED HIS MIND DON'T QUOTE ME REGULATIONS, CAPTAIN--IT'S A LITTLE *LATE* FOR THAT
THIS ISN'T SOME TECHNICAL *QUIBBLE* I PULLED OUT OF THE *RECRUITING* MANUAL--I'M TALKING COMMON SENSE
YOUR SHIP'S BEEN RECONFIGURED FOR GRAVITY DRIVE--YOU JUST DON'T POP BEHIND THE STEERING WHEEL AND TAKE HER OUT FOR A *SPIN*--
THEN *I'D* BETTER FLY HER
"NO - NOW "YES"
WHAT THE HELL'S YOUR *PROBLEM*, HICKS?
WHAT DO *YOU* CARE? RIPLEY NEEDS A PILOT--I'M VOLUNTEERING..
..AND I'M ALL YOU'VE *GOT*.

EVER SINCE I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, I'VE FOUND THAT *PROMISES* ARE LITTLE MORE THAN LIES MEANT TO BE BROKEN--

YO, NEWT-- WE'RE *READY*.

GOOD

BE THERE IN A MINUTE

--BUT AS WE PREPARED FOR LIFTOFF, I MADE A PROMISE TO *MYSELF*--

--AND TO A LITTLE GIRL I'D NEVER MET.

I'LL BE *BACK*, AMY.

I *SWEAR* IT

RIPLEY HAD PUT TOGETHER A *CREW* FROM THE SPACE STATION'S STRANDED *MILITARY* CONTINGENT--INTRIGUING THEM WITH THE OPPORTUNITY TO *FIGHT* AGAIN--

DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS MISSION'S ALL *ABOUT*, BUT I'D DO JUST ABOUT ANYTHING TO GET OFF THIS PLATFORM.

YOU MAY *HAVE* TO.

--BUT THERE WERE STILL *QUESTIONS*. ALWAYS QUESTIONS.

GRAVITY DRIVE'S NOMINAL, FUEL'S GOOD, AND I'M SHOWING GREEN ACROSS THE BOARD.

BETTER PUT THE *CAT* OUT, RIPLEY WE'RE *OUT* OF HERE.

NOT YET I WANT TO KNOW *WHY*, HICKS

WHAT DO YOU *WANT* TO HEAR? THAT YOU WERE RIGHT? THAT THERE'S *MORE* TO THIS THAN THOSE DAMNED THINGS?

IS THAT THE *REASON*?

I DON'T KNOW MAYBE IT'S ALL I'VE *GOT*--

--BESIDES YOUR *DREAMS*--

KA-CHI-K!

" -- AND MY NIGHTMARES."
WE'VE BEEN IN SPACE THREE DAYS NOW YOU'VE HAD A CHANCE TO MEET ONE ANOTHER AND SPECULATE ON THE NATURE OF OUR MISSION
I APPRECIATE YOUR FAITH--

--SINCE THAT'S ALL WE VE REALLY GOT.
TEN YEARS AGO, I MADE CONTACT WITH AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL INTELLIGENCE. IT--IT SPOKE TO ME--TOLD ME OF THE WORLD THAT FIRST SPAWNED THE ALIEN
THE DRONES ARE ONLY VASSALS GUIDED BY A SUPERIOR, EXTERNAL INTELLIGENCE
MANY OF US HAVE FELT THIS ALIEN PRESENCE-- THE TORTURED, EMPATHETIC BOND IT SHARES WITH ITS CHILDREN--
--ITS HUNGER TO BE WHOLE AGAIN
THE CREATURES WERE NEVER MEANT TO BE APART TOGETHER. THEY CREATE THE NEXUS OF ALIEN LIFE. ONE CANNOT ENDURE WITHOUT THE OTHER
BUT THEY WERE SEPARATED, SPREADING BETWEEN WORLDS LIKE SEEDS IN THE WIND--
--AND THROUGH IT ALL, SHE'S BEEN CALLING TO THEM CALLING THEM BACK.
SO MOMMA MISSES HER KIDS TOUGH SHIT
WHAT THE HELL ARE WE GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?

THE BITCH WANTS HER *BABIES*. WE CAN'T BRING THEM *TO* HER--

--SO WE'LL BRING *HER* TO EARTH--

--IN *THIS*.

THE SHELLS ARE IMPERVIOUS TO THE ALIEN'S *ACID*--BUT MORE IMPORTANTLY, THEY'LL SUGGEST *HOME*--*FAMILY*--

--HER LOST *BROOD*.

THAT'S WHY YOU DRAGGED US OUT HERE? TO PLAY *CHAUFFEUR*--TO BRING *MORE* OF THOSE THINGS TO EARTH FOR A *FAMILY* DAMN *REUNION*--? YOU MUST BE OUT OF YOUR--

JESUS--ORONA'S *BOMBS*...

BEFORE EARTH WAS LOST, A GOVERNMENT SC ENTIST NAMED ORONA CONCEIVED A PLAN TO DETONATE MULTIPLE NUCLEAR WARHEADS IN THE INFESTED AREAS.
ORONA DIED BEFORE THE BOMBS COULD BE TRIG-GERED.
THIS THING-- THIS "MOTHER QUEEN"-- WILL DRAW HER CHILDREN TO HER
SHE'LL TRY TO REPLICATE THE WORLD THEY LEFT BEHIND--
--AND WHEN THEY'VE JOINED IN THE R GRAND UNION--
--WE'LL DESTROY THEM WE'LL DESTROY THEM ALL.

GATEWAY PLATFORM TWO DAYS LATER
UHH, CAPTAIN MCQUADE, THIS IS DONNELL, DECK THREE. YOU'D BETTER HAVE A LOOK AT THIS.
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT, DONNELL?
I-- I'M NOT SURE, CAPTAIN.
AT FIRST I BLAMED THE READINGS ON FAULTY MONITORING EQUIPMENT--
--BUT LOOK AT THIS. WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT SOME ISOLATED EVENT-- IT'S GLOBAL.
JESUS.
THIS IS CRAZY-- THESE SURFACE TEMPERATURES ARE FAR BELOW CLIMATIC NORMS...
THAT'S NOT ALL ATMOSPHERIC COMPOSITION, MOISTURE PATTERNS, WIND FLUCTUATIONS--
--THEY'RE MIMICKING THE SORTS OF READINGS YOU'D SEE IN THE EMBRYONIC STAGES OF A TERRAFORMING PROJECT.
CRAZY THING IS, I'VE LOCALIZED THE ENERGY SOURCE--
--SIR IT'S PLASMA-BASED-- AND IT'S COMING FROM SPACE!

BUG HUNT

c/o Dark Horse Comics
2008 S.E. Monroe St.
Milwaukie, OR 97222

Before launching into your letters on the new Aliens: Earth War *series (next month, I promise), I thought I'd present one last round of comments on Dark Horse's second run of* Aliens, *especially since you all had so much to say about the Mark Verheiden/Denis Beauvais outing! To wit...*

Dear Bug Hunt,

Your *Aliens* comic is the best I've ever seen. In fact, it's the only comic that I consider viable entertainment. (I've not seen any other Dark Horse works.) *[Well, hop to it!]* Anyway, it's a shame that it has to be screwed up by a lack of distribution and release schedules. I don't see why you don't get some bigger company to back you so that you could do it properly. The comic itself would be better if it were released regularly, the readers would be happier, and you guys could certainly make a helluva lot more money if your works realized their full potential.

Aside from that, I'd like to make some observations about the Aliens.

Firstly, they don't appear to have eyes. I suppose they could be hidden somewhere, but I prefer to think they rely on something else, like sonar hearing. Or even better, maybe they rely on a sense that is unfamiliar to earthlings, something like a biological motion-tracker. The point is, when the Predators take on the Aliens, I think their invisibility/camouflage trick will count for zero. *[Absolutely right.]*

Also, I can't imagine the Aliens as being warm-blooded. That means the Predators' heat vision should be worthless, too.

Now, the Predators are highly intelligent and should be able to adapt to these considerations. But before they can, they will inevitably get their asses kicked. I imagine their first encounter to resemble that of the marines in the film, but even funnier, because the Predators must have even bigger egos.

I think *Aliens vs. Predator* is a great idea, but the Terminators would be an even better enemy for the Predators. The Cyberdyne computer would have been the perfect match, intellectually speaking. It would be one helluva war! How about giving that one some thought?

Sincerely,
John Tucker
Jackson, MS

John, it's doubtful that you'll see a Terminator/Predator crossover, as the characters are owned and licensed for publication by two different companies (unlike Aliens and Predator). Of course, one never knows...

As to the scheduling of Dark Horse titles, I think you have to admit that we've recently gone a long way toward alleviating many of the difficulties, particularly in the case of licensed properties -- and we've managed to do it all by our little ol' selves, without the "help" of any bigger company.

Dear Dark Horse,

I would like to compliment you on your excellent second issue of the *Aliens* vol. II series by saying *Eeeeeeaaagghh!* The art was truly intense, and the story was fast-paced and more than just a little frightening; Mark Verheiden and Denis Beauvais sure know their xenomorphs! But the best part of the entire book was Denis' fantastic cover. It was probably the best cover I have ever seen on a comic book, with that wicked and grisly "I'm going to get you" grin; Denis really captures an evil unique to these creatures. What else can I say but "Wow"? Please, keep disturbing me.

Sincerely,
Ken Hough
Minot, ND

Consider yourself thoroughly disturbed, Ken!

Dear Dark Horse,

Wow! Issue #3 of the exceptional second series of *Aliens* was simply incredible. The combination of Verheiden and Beauvais has turned out to create one of the all-time greatest mini-series. Beauvais has the talent to turn ugliness into a work of art. Issue #3 only raised my already high esteem for the quality of comic books you are currently releasing. Issue #3

contained many surprises for me, but the biggest surprise was how General Spears learned to control the Aliens. It was a brilliant idea.

Now it is time to wrap this letter up and wait for the resounding conclusion in issue #4. I know I will not be disappointed.

A fan 'til the end,
Justin Paul
Clackamas, OR

Issue #4 definitely generated a lot of commentary, especially since it featured the return of our fave gal – you wanted her, you got her -- Ripley!

Dear Mark and Denis,

Re the last page of *Aliens #4: about bloody time!*

Thank you.

David Perry
Notts, England

You're welcome! On the other hand...

Dudes --

Re *Aliens* vol. II #4, page 24:

Awwwww... No!

Not her! Not Ripley!

I'm pullin' for the Aliens now!

Uncle Elvis
Clarksville, TN

P.S. No more late Dark Horse books? Ever?! I'll believe it when I see it.

Elvis, why so cantankerous? Join me for a quick one at Munden's and chill out, man!

Dear Bug Hunters,

Ever since I saw the *Aliens* and *Predator* movies, I've been hooked on those kinds of sci-fi thriller movies -- and now the comic books, thanks to you guys. The second *Aliens* series was way better than the first one. The first series only served as a sort of exploration of the Aliens' origin preceding the first movie. The best Aliens story (in my opinion) is the one from *Dark Horse Presents* #24, which looks into the ways the Aliens breed, interact with one another, and fight for survival.

All four issues from the second series are totally excellent. The airbrushed artwork is the best I've seen in a long time. The only thing I didn't like in issue #4 was the last page. Don't get me wrong -- it's great that Ripley is back. I don't understand why Denis Beauvais painted Ripley carrying a gun that not even Arnold Schwarzenegger could lift. Bill Sienkiewicz did the same with the *Elektra: Assassin* mini-series. Talk about women in charge of heavy artillery! Anyway, I loved this comic book. I can't wait 'til *Aliens: Earth War.*

Juan C. Diniz
Louisville, KY

Just be thankful Ripley wasn't wearing a bikini, too!

Dear Bug Hunt,

I had to laugh at the final page of the four-parter, amused as I was by the image of Ripley's somewhat staged appearance. Not for the fact that she is posing with a ludicrously large, intricate, and no doubt deadly weapon (perhaps you should sign Simon Bisley to pencil *Aliens: Earth War*, as he is the undisputed master of the big gun!), but the fact that her character was supposed to be a more realistic alternative to the tired, macho tough guys. Yet what do we find: her long-awaited appearance reduced to comedy by Ramboesque posturing and "kick ass" dialogue. A world away from what we might have expected, yes?

On the whole, *Aliens* is an excellent series, far better perhaps than a film sequel could ever be. Okay, its feel is dark, visually and emotionally -- it's violent, frightening, savage, and uncompromising almost to the point of obsessional in its narrative. Yet the last page broke the spell. Ripley, the one-woman army, Earth's only hope!

I'd never have expected to finish *Aliens* with a wry grin on my face; still, I hear that Mr. Schwarzenegger's to star in part three.

David Allmond
Oxford, England

David, you're such a cynic! But have you considered that maybe Ripley is too, after all she's been through?

Dear Mark and Denis,

It's James again. I wrote the letter in issue #4 of the second *Aliens* series. Hey, Mark! I'm sorry about the comment I made about the *Predator* series, which you write so well. I've finally gotten around to buying the series.

Well, anyway, back to *Aliens.* I'm on my 46th time of seeing *Aliens.* Your comics are still as great as when I started reading them. I won't ever stop. Your *Aliens* comics are my second favorite things in the world -- the first are the movies. When I saw Ripley on the last page of issue #4 of the second series, I jumped up and shouted, "She's back!" I'll continue to buy everything even remotely related to *Aliens* produced by Dark Horse.

In regard to the *Aliens vs. Predator* series, I don't really care who wins, just as long as it's a

fun, bloody, mass-destructive comic. Oh, by the way, I dedicated a song to Dark Horse at the local radio station. *[What song?]* I'm an extremely devoted fan.

If you print this in *Aliens*, I'd like to give my best wishes to both you guys, and Sigourney Weaver, Michael Biehn, and James Cameron.

Until the Mother Alien is a guest star on *Joan Rivers*, make mine Dark Horse for eternity (or longer).

Sincerely,
James Stambaugh
Walnut Creek, CA

You've seen the movie 46 times?!

Dear *Aliens* (is that a weird way to start a letter or what?),

Okay, so issue four's come out and the series is finished...well, not really, since you've brought back Ripley and she's rearin' to go off into another limited series! Maybe you should just call the whole thing one big ongoing series and save yourselves the trouble of renumbering and renaming...

Denis Beauvais' art once again proved to be the real star. Some of the lights on page six made me wonder if you didn't print this book with neon. And I certainly hope you don't get in trouble for burning the flag on page 21. Even though I've had three issues of Beauvais' work to prepare me for *Aliens* vol. II #4, I *still* can't get over it! Can you clue us in to his other projects in a future lettercol?

Oh...what's the stuff covering up the art? Oh, it's *lettering*. And where does that lettering come from? *Writing*? Oh, yeah, I guess there's more to this series than just pretty pictures, after all. Earlier, I wrote you guys a letter expressing disappointment at the development of certain subplots. While it hasn't all gone quite where I would've liked, Mark Verheiden's script for issue #4 has provided a satisfying conclusion to the story he has chosen to write. The Butler/Newt relationship has ended with an appropriate dose of ignominy, and General Spears has finally got what he's had coming to him. And the letter writers have finally gotten what they've been screaming for -- Ripley!

Yes, they've been wondering about Ripley. So have I. I have another question, though: Where's Bishop? Did he "die" at the end of *Aliens* after all? Did he get recalled? Or has he merely been smart enough to stay away from the action? He may be synthetic, but he's not stupid!

Congratulations on the successful completion of yet another *Aliens* series.

Erik Carvalhal Miller
Bloomington, IN

Though Bishop was ripped in half at the end of Aliens, *Erik, I wouldn't necessarily take that to mean he's "dead." While his android body is no longer fit for survival, presumably his memories could be downloaded into another body. Only Twentieth Century Fox knows for sure...*

Dear Randy,

I just finished *Aliens* vol. II #4. I've really enjoyed these two series. They've captured the spirit of their inspirer without imitating. And they've been very substantial stories -- maybe more so than the movies. I eagerly await *Aliens: Earth War*, especially for Sam Kieth's art.

And now for something completely different (yep, *Monty Python* fan), a complaint: the letters column, or rather, the lack of them. Let's get one in each and every issue, okay? How am I going to see my name in print if you don't? Ha, ha!

Thoughts, through typewriter, via mail, by...

Scott Tilson
Streetsville, Ontario
Canada

Scott, the letters pages are one of the most fun aspects of my job as an editor -- and as a onetime letterhack myself, I wouldn't dream of doing away with lettercols, so keep writing.

Dear Dark Horse,

Aliens -- both series so far -- is simply the best. *Aliens Book I* was incredible; the combination of an excellent story line with the equally excellent team of Mr. Verheiden and Mr. Nelson resulted in, well...excellence! I admit that I was a bit apprehensive about the transition to color as well as to a new artist, believing that absolutely nothing could do the first *Aliens* credit, but I was blown away by the efforts of Mr. Verheiden and Mr. Beauvais! The stark colors, the body language, and the mood of tension created in the art made the second *Aliens* series even better than the first. Simply amazing -- you took one of the most successful and popular series in years and actually managed to improve it tremendously! Amazing! Hopefully you'll improve even more on the upcoming *Aliens: Earth War* series.

Yours truly,
Anderson C. Marcus
Philadelphia, PA

I'll be waiting for your opinion of Earth War *with baited breath, Anderson. Be with us next issue -- only one* month *from now -- as Ripley goes head-to-head with Mama Alien and we present a sampling of critiques on the new series. All that and the Sam Kieth controversy! See you then.*

-- Diana Schutz

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